

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5268

As Passed House - Amended:

April 7, 2009

Title: An act relating to the fish and wildlife equipment revolving account.

Brief Description: Creating the fish and wildlife equipment revolving account.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker, Jacobsen and Shin; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 3/12/09, 3/19/09 [DPA];

General Government Appropriations: 3/24/09, 3/26/09 [DPA(AGNR)].

Floor Activity

Passed House - Amended: 4/7/09, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Creates the Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account (Account) in the custody of the State Treasurer.
- Provides guidance for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding which funds must be deposited into the Account and what they may be used for.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Grant-Herriot, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Smith, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jacks, Kretz, McCoy, Nelson, Ormsby, Pearson, Van De Wege and Warnick.

Staff: Anna Jackson (786-7190)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass as amended by Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Darneille, Chair; Takko, Vice Chair; McCune, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Blake, Crouse, Dunshee, Hudgins, Kenney, Pedersen, Sells, Short, Van De Wege and Williams.

Staff: Owen Rowe (786-7391)

Background:

Currently the State Wildlife Account (Wildlife Account) exists in the State Treasury. The Wildlife Account consists of funds received from a variety of sources by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), such as rentals or concessions of the WDFW, the sale of real or personal property held for the purposes of the WDFW, the assessment of administrative penalties, and the sale of most licenses, permits, tags, and stamps.

Funds received from other specified sources, however, must be deposited into the General Fund. These sources include the sale of commercial licenses, funds received for damages to food fish or shellfish, fines and forfeitures collected or assessed by a district court for a violation of RCW Title 77 (Fish and Wildlife), and proceeds from other activities.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. The WDFW must reimburse the Account for all funds expended from the Account. The WDFW must deposit all funds generated by the use, repair, or sale of vehicles, water vessels, and heavy equipment into the Account. The WDFW's reimbursements may be prorated over the useful life of the vehicle, water vessel, or heavy equipment.

Expenditures from the Account may only be used for the purchase or lease of vehicles, water vessels, and heavy equipment, including payments for the operation, repair, and maintenance of these items. Only the Director of the WDFW or the Director's designee may authorize expenditures from the Account. The Account is subject to allotment procedures, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

The terms and charges for the intra-agency use or disposal through sale of vehicles, water vessels, or heavy equipment is solely within the discretion of the WDFW, and the WDFW's determination of the terms, charges, or sale price will be considered reasonable.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Agriculture & Natural Resources):

(In support) The WDFW manages 1,150 licensed vehicles, 141 off-road vehicles, 355 vessels, and 163 pieces of heavy equipment. This bill would provide the WDFW with the basic authority and ability to create a self-sustaining fund for managing its vehicles and equipment. Present authority does not allow the WDFW to charge full cost for the use of these assets. Instead, the WDFW is limited to charging only operation and maintenance costs. Replacement costs for these vehicles and equipment have therefore been deducted from operation costs on an ad hoc basis and have not been funded by sources that actually use the vehicles. The WDFW is funded by hundreds of contracts from which vehicle use is charged, and the present financial structure does not allow the WDFW to plan and manage the replacement of vehicles over their lifespan, which is the most common and logical practice. Under the new, centralized structure presented in this bill, the WDFW would reduce the age of its fleet, the overall operating costs, and the number of vehicles, as well as improve the safety, efficiency, and environmental impact of the equipment.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (General Government Appropriations):

(In support) The Fish and Wildlife Equipment Revolving Account in this bill gives the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) a tool to help upgrade our fleet. Over time we've used vacancy or other one-time savings to purchase vehicles and equipment. In the past, the Department has not been able to replace vehicles as needed, and this budget cycle will use all of our savings to meet the budget shortfall. The Department manages several funds, and we are currently unable to charge for depreciation for both state and federal funds. There will be long term savings by allowing the Department to maintain its fleet with newer vehicles that will cost less to maintain and will be more efficient.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying (Agriculture & Natural Resources): Jeff Olsen, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Testifying (General Government Appropriations): Jeff Olsen, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Agriculture & Natural Resources): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (General Government Appropriations): None.